The Sunday Tribune's News and Reviews of Books and Authors

We Recommend—

By Burton Rascoe

SHOUTS AND MURMURS. By Alexander Woollcott. The Century Company. New York: 1922.

I READ this book—with unqualified enjoyment—from cover to cover in less than two hours. I state that as a tribute to the rapidity of the narrative, the sustained interest and amusement of the contents, and the happy anecdotal tone of the author; for it is a book of the usual size, running to 264 pages. Nothing, I may further record, has been a greater surprise to me than this book. What with so much reading to do, I left off following Mr. Woollcott's newspaper critiques some months ago, when I came upon a tribute to Molnar, apropos of "Liliom," in which he said: "He has sifted the rags of Budapest and got a glint of gold." Life is too short for a man with whom reading is a profession to go in for that sort of thing as a relaxation.

But I see I shall have to give him another trial. Perhaps I was too peremptory. We all make mistakes, and flowery alliteration *is* a temptation. Possibly I shall be rewarded with as much genuine entertainment, as much delightful gossip, as much information, and as much human sympathy as may be found in this book. If not, I shall read the book again, as I intend to do, come what may. And such other books as come from Mr. Woollcott I shall attend with as much of the expectancy of one who has been pleased by reading as of one who is paid for reviewing.

The foreword gives the title and sets the note: "And there sat at the Players' Club one who spoke always with the accent of authority, giving firmly the impression that his own story and the story of the theater were two inseparable strands of the same woof. Indeed, he sometimes referred casually and hazily to five seasons passed at dear old Drury Lane. He has to explain then that his talent had always been devoted to off-stage noises. Finally he showed a Drury Lane program, yellowed and creased and wine-stained. There his name was at the end of the cast and opposite it was the rôle assigned to him—*Shouts and Murmurs*—Old Fable."

This is not the familiar false humility, the elaborate denial of omniscience that one may be all the more high-handed and dogmatic; this is, merely to establish the human, affable, and yarn-spinning tone that obtains through the book. Here are stories of the foyers on first nights and of the back stage; stories of the element of chance that has so much to do with the failure or success of theatrical production; anecdotes of stage celebrities, personalities, epigrams, comments and criticism; the personal story of Eugene O'Neill; how Frank Tinney started out as an embalmer's assistant in Philadelphia, and arrived at his present eminence among the great comedians of musical comedy; how O. Henry sold George Tyler the plot of "A Retrieved Reformation" for $500 and how Paul Armstrong adapted it under the title "Alias Jimmy Valentine," which made fortunes for every one concerned except O. Henry, and innumerable sad and jolly bits of information. There is very little formal dramatic criticism. Most of it is sheer entertainment, which also happens to be a good document in the history of the American stage.

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"BABEL" (Liveright), by John Cournos—The third volume in an autobiographical trilogy which includes "The Mask" and "The Wall," two distinguished novels which were obscured by the mass of novels in kind when they were published; a successful attempt to do what Jacob Wassermann tried to do in "The World's Illusion," and, I think, failed, i. e., present a vivid cyclorama of the excited and confused cross-purposes of modern centers of civilization; frank, intimate and personal reactions to, and estimates of, such figures in the literary and artistic world as H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Gilbert Chesterton, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Jacob Epstein, the nouveaux calottins of the N. R. F., and the heroes of the studios of Chelsea, Montmartre and Greenwich Village, all under the thinnest of nomenclature disguises; a love story of a peculiar and realistic poignancy; an honest autobiography in terms of fiction by a temperamental and sensitive young Russian Jew who worked out his writer's apprenticeship on a Philadelphia newspaper and went in search of the Bright Medusa in New York, Paris and London; an excellent "case history" for psycho-analysts: one is reminded frequently of Sherwood Anderson's observation that too many men think too much about being writers and not enough about writing, but one is faced by the fact that Cournos thinks a great deal about being an author and yet succeeds in being one with an enviable gift for clear and precise expression, for apt and conclusive character drawing and for a refreshingly spontaneous response to impressions; in fine, a worthy book in the tradition of "Tono-Bungay."

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"TALES OF THE JAZZ AGE" (Scribner's), by F. Scott Fitzgerald—A collection of skits, playlets and short stories of varying merit, from the sentimental vapidity of "The Lees of Happiness" to "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," which is, with "Blue Ice" and "Benediction," the high-water mark of Fitzgerald's achievement as a prose artist of abundant, exuberant, irresponsible and incorrigible talents. In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" Fitzgerald lets himself go and follows his satiric, fantastic and impish genii where they list. The book also contains "Mr. Icky," the playlet with the happy conceit of a girl's response to courtship from the warm suds of a bathtub; and other ephemerae which breed in the workshop of Mr. Fitzgerald's Celtic imagination.

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"LOVE AND FREINDSHIP" (Stokes), by Jane Austen—A collection of hitherto unpublished manuscripts by the greatest master of the gentle art of kidding in English fiction; a seventeen-year-old genius's burlesque of the romantic novels of the "fainting heroine" period and of the method of historiographers; a much funnier book than Daisy Ashford's and an indication of the early direction of Jane Austen's satiric talent. One learns from this that Miss Austen was not the austere, spinster-minded bluestocking she has been pictured. She was a whimsical and passionate soul with an intelligence probably a little too acute for comfort in this world.

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"BABBITT" (Harcourt), by Sinclair Lewis—A neat impaling of the boob booster of the American bourgeosie upon the pen of a humorous and sympathetic satirist; a description of the successful neighbor you most dislike in terms you wish you had thought of, and that neighbor's portrait of you in the pigments he wishes he could wield; a composite photograph of Mr. Lewis, you and me, a little out of focus, the better to call attention to the queer, unflattering qualities of our make-up; a successful, amusing, ironic, human document in our social history.

An Author's Letter

Grant Overton of the George H. Doran Co., permits us to read the following letter from Arnold Bennett.

Yacht Marie Marguerite, 27-7-22.

Dear Mr. Grant Overton: Many thanks for your fine letter and postscript. But the fact is that the idea and the whole story came to me one day last summer, all in a moment, on board my yacht; that I wrote it on another yacht, the Amaryllis, belonging to my beloved friend Herbert Sullivan, nephew of the composer of "The Mikado," at Monte Carlo, Nice and Cannes in December and January last. There is bound to be trouble over the ending of "Lilian." People will say it isn't conclusive. Well, as far as that goes, death itself isn't conclusive. A book has to end somewhere, and if the book didn't end before the birth of the baby it would comprise the beginning of another book. The attitude of Lilian toward her life is clearly indicated. I can't go any further. I call my ending a happy ending.

I doubt if you will do so well, with this miserable raw material for publicity.

By the way, the following isn't in your department, but I will unscrupulously trouble you with it. I have received proofs of the book from your house. It was very naughty of your house to set up the book before receiving corrected English proofs. I cannot correct two sets of proofs. I would as soon go to hell. I shall cause to be sent to you corrected English proofs and from these your proof readers will kindly put the American proofs right. It will mean that somebody will have to read the whole book aloud to somebody else. I am sorry for both of them.

"Pieces of Hate" is a jolly affair.

Yours sincerely,
ARNOLD BENNETT.

THE WILD WEST

Dear Sir:

Thank you for reviewing my novel, "The Sky Line of Spruce," in The Tribune. I would rather have a deprecating review than no review at all.

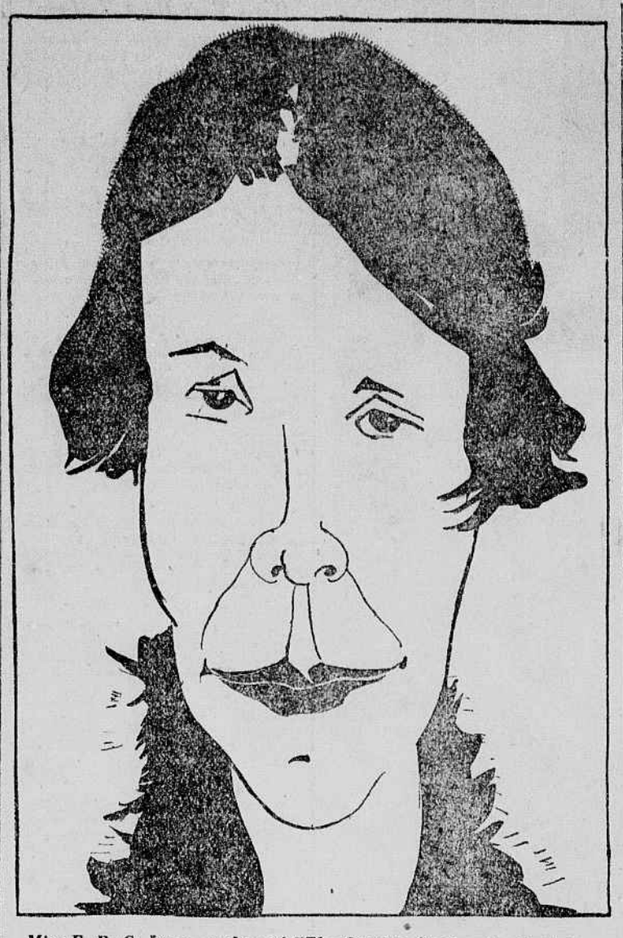
Since the publication of "Merton of the Movies" authors of Western stories have had a great deal of kidding about "the open places" and "where men are men." I would like to be able to convince you, however, that the West of which I write, particularly the Northwest, is very much a reality. It isn't tame by a long shot.

The casual tourist sees only a commercialized West. The real West—I mean, if you will, the woolly West—cannot be reached in an automobile or a Pullman car. The journey requires many days on packhorses. Things happen there every day that I don't dare write about, because not only the reviewers but the general public would never believe me. Take, for instance, Alaska. At present there is a movement on to have all the grizzlies of southeastern Alaska killed because they are claimed to be, by hairy old prospectors and woodsmen, a menace to human life. There are still vast wildernesses where white men never penetrate. An author has to try to be plausible, but you get hold of a real woodsman some time—old lads such as I have met in Barkerville or on the Iskut, for that matter back in our own game-teeming forests—and you will get an ear full.

I wish I could take some of the more skeptical reviewers with me on a grizzly bear hunt. Yours cordially,

EDISON MARSHALL.

Medford, Oregon.



Miss E. B. C. Jones, author of "The Singing Captives." Caricature by Djuna Barnes.

Some Recent Fiction

By Isabel Paterson

FIVE NIGHTS AT THE FIVE PINES. By Avery Gaul. Century Company.
THREE BLACK BAGS. By Marion Polk Angellotti. Century Company.
THE ROMANCE OF A MILLION DOLLARS. By Elizabeth Dejeans. Bobbs-Merrill.
KASTLE KRAGS. By Absolom Martin. Duffield & Co.
IN JEOPARDY. By Van Tassel Sutphen. Harper & Bros.
PHILIP DERBY, REPORTER. By Willis J. Abbott. Dood, Mead & Co.

IF THE publishers have their way about it reading contemporary fiction will soon cease to be a placid and ruminative occupation. To judge by the book advertisements, a non-partisan attitude on the part of the Gentle Reader is no longer allowable; he must hurl himself into the moving stream of events with the characters, and take chances of emerging again mentally unscathed. "What would you do," the stern interrogation glares out in bold-face type, "if your wife eloped with the milkman, and forgot even to leave a pint of cream for breakfast?" Or one is asked, after the manner of a Binet test: "What secret power drew this brilliant woman into retirement?" said retirement being between the covers of an extremely popular novel. If that involves too much ratiocination then answer yes or no: "Who was Andivius Hedulio?" You give it up? Do not hope to escape so easily; you must then submit to be judged by the characters of the novels, and a grilling ordeal it is for a modest man. Who knows what may hang upon his answer to the curt demand: "What would a South Sea maiden think of you?" No paltering; the issue must be squarely faced.

The safest course, then, is to turn to such fiction as need not involve taking sides on any burning questions of morals or politics; to wit, mystery tales.

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This season offers a remarkable number of very good ones. Of the six here listed nearly all are well constructed and written in that stark, clear English which is essential to stories of plot and action. Some offer extra added attractions in the shape of local color and neat character drawing; as, for instance, "Five Nights at the Five Pines," with the problem of which we will grapple first.

What, then, would you do if in defiance of the advice of the entire village you purchased a house on Cape Cod in order to spend a summer in peace and quiet, and then found the blamed place was haunted? Such was the annoying predicament of Mrs. Jasper Curdy, the lady who temerariously endured the five nights, and found a fresh horror awaiting her each night. Floor-boards creaked dismally, latches lifted under pressure of invisible fingers, footsteps perambulated a non-existent staircase. And Mrs. Curdy had to stick it out alone. Her husband was a playwright, and was unexpectedly detained in New York, being more concerned to learn whether the box-office ghost would walk on the ensuing Saturday than with any spooky activities in his new country home. No Cape Codder would risk a night in that ill-omened dwelling. Its late owner, Captain Jeremiah Hawes, had risen from his coffin once, literally, and they believed him quite capable of doing so again. Also they were perfectly certain that in his coffin, or out, he would extremely dislike the notion of strange tenants in the house where he had lived out his warped, embittered existence with his horrible old mother and the girl he loved and dared not marry. There were, in fact, several possible revisitants, none of them cheerful to contemplate, and the solution of the mystery provides a tragic thrill of its own. You may guess who the ghost was, before the author chooses to reveal it, but you are very unlikely to fathom the secret that it guarded, through life and death.

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An ancestral home is also the center of the mystery "In Jeopardy." The Hildebrand Hundred, an old crown grant in Maryland and seat of an aristocratic Colonial family, was fatal to its owners until at last it went to a Northern scion of the race who knew nothing of its history. Now, if you had stood in his shoes, and gradually learned that there was some sort of curse upon the place, especially during the month of June of each year, would you have lingered around trying to find out why and what it was, or would you have hastily wished it onto some unsuspecting purchaser? No doubt the latter; but in that case there would have been no story—which would be a pity. It was an awful chance Hugh Hildebrand took, but a great reward came to him through it. Everything about this story is plausible and well motivated, except, perhaps, the agency of death, and that is so weird it is quite excusable. Several pleasingly diabolical villains, male and female, also play their parts in the events leading up to a dramatic denouement.

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Kastle Krags is yet a third house of dread. It stands on the edge of a Florida swamp, and those who think of Florida in terms of sun and flowers should read the first chapter of this tale, which is a really admirable bit of descriptive writing, conveying a picture of the sinister and somber charm of that shadowed interior country where tourists seldom penetrate. The terror that haunted Kastle Krags was in keeping; it seemed to lure its prey to their unknown doom by night only. And to add to the general creepiness of the situation, the bodies disappeared. Even one who had been seen lying dead was spirited away immediately afterward. Would you, timid reader, in view of these circumstances, have gone prowling about after dark in the neighborhood of that house? Would you have remained in the vicinity at all, no matter what the inducements? Our hero did; likewise our heroine. They deserved all they got—which is not meant to be ambiguous for they found treasure of various sorts, including true love. An interesting theory is propounded incidentally, of hereditary family dislikes; that is to say, of families whose members inevitably hate each other, by a painful reversal of the usual order of nature.

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"The Romance of a Million Dollars" is a highly intriguing title. Or, anyway, a million dollars is romantic, and the possibility of possessing it is very provocative of intrigue. Ah, there is a question: what would you do for a million dollars? I'd do almost anything but work—the chances of acquiring any such sum by honest toil on my part being so slim as to make it scarcely worth while. Not all of us are so lucky as young Marie Angouleme, nor so talented. She could run a garage! That, and her pretty face, so endeared her to the strong-minded Mrs. Dumbarton-Kent that the old lady first hired her as a chauffeur and afterward adopted her as a daughter. Thus was Marie precipitated into a family quarrel of long standing and such bitterness as only near relatives can feel for each other. There are a few thumping improbabilities to be assumed by the reader, but such form the basis of any mystery tale, and the unfolding of this one is very neatly done.

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With "Three Black Bags" we travel to the occupied Rhineland and get a glimpse of the unrepentant Hun, who is depicted as still biding his time, if not for "Der Tag," then for "Die Nacht," when Deutschland shall again rise trumphant ueber alles. It's no use inquiring what course you would follow if you were in the boots of Colonel Everett Ramsey, the hero of Valencay, or rather it is entirely unfair. He was a hero to begin with, and no one less brave could have successfully uncovered and frustrated the deep-laid plot of the Germans to massacre the Army of Occupation at midnight and fetch the Kaiser back to his old home at Potsdam. Even a man of equal courage, but not quite so handsome, would have failed, for then the Princess Ilse would never have fallen in love with him, in her tigerish way, at sight and saved him when he innocently meandered into a trap and was brought bound and gagged to a German castle in the forest.

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The problem set before "Philip Derby, Reporter," requires lengthy exposition, after the manner of an alienist's hypothetical question. Suppose first that you were a copy boy on a great New York daily and wanted to be a reporter. Never mind why.

Suppose, further, that a vacancy occurred on the staff by reason of a reporter being kidnaped by the Black Hand. Now wait a minute. We know, of course, that you would instantly ask for the job, but that would do no good. First you must show your ability to handle a story. Suppose then that you went out in your spare time after hours and tracked down that missing reporter, till you located him bound and locked up in a tenement on the East Side, under guard and threatened with death. And suppose you made that discovery at such a time that if you called the police in right away and set the kidnaped reporter free the morning papers would get the story, whereas your sheet was an evening event. What would you do? You wouldn't know what to do, of course.

Philip Derby never faltered. He went home and had a good sleep. He knew that kidnaped reporter was securely tied up and wouldn't spoil before morning. And in the morning, of course, when his story was safe, he dropped in and let the critter loose. This is almost as good a yarn as the one about the cold-hearted city editor who was told over the telephone: "That reporter you sent down to cover the fire has been caught under a falling wall and killed instantly." To which the city editor replied: "Is that so? All right, I'll send another."

The Censor and the Classics

City Magistrate Charles A. Oberwager's decision last week in dismissing the case of the Society for the Suppression of Vice against Boni & Liveright, Inc., publishers of a translation of the "Satyricon," by Petronius, is so intrinsically interesting as literary criticism and as a sane judicial decision that it is published in part herewith:

PETRONIUS is generally thought to have lived in the time of Nero and according to tradition was the arbiter of elegance and dictator of fashion in the Court of Nero. The "Satyricon" is a keen satire on the vulgarity of mere wealth, its vanity and its grossness, and constitutes a fragment containing parts of two books out of a total of sixteen. The author was interested in the intellectual pursuits, as well as in the vices and follies of his own evil time. The worship of the flesh and its lusts alternately disgusted and fascinated him. Petronius is the burning symbol of the final corruption, with its terror, its magnificence and pathos, of that tottering world of Rome which was shown to go down before the rising tide of a new religion and a new race.

The book portrays an important part of the history of civilization, and the prosecution gives rise to the question whether the record of civilization can be suppressed.

With this prosecution the Society for the Suppression of Vice seeks to impose a duty upon the court to exercise a censorship over literature with a view of suppressing a work of literary merit which has lived for 1,900 years. But such is not the duty of the courts, irrespective of the character of the book, unless its publication or circulation is accomplished in violation of the criminal statutes. . . . The historical value of the "Satyricon" is a matter which cannot be lightly brushed aside. It must be admitted that the "Satyricon" is a part of the body of classical literature. Its value has been recognized both from the historical and literary viewpoint. It has been assigned the place of the prototype of picaresque literature and critics have avowed its influence upon such great writers as Stern, Fielding, Smollett and Rabelais.

Its value to the student and the scholar is such that it would be too serious a matter to deny access to it, for ancient literature enlarges and enriches the mind.

There are undeniably many obscene passages in the book, but the mere existence of isolated passages is not of itself sufficient to condemn a literatry work as falling within the prohibitive pale, for, if such were the rule, an attack could be launched at almost every classic on the shelves of our libraries.

Time has determined that this work must survive, and were it simply a piece of obscenity it would have perished long since and never have reached the portals of this tribunal. If we are to hack away at a work that has stood the test of ages, are we not pitting a temporal opinion against the cumulative weight of authority of centuries, which must perforce overcome the voice of protest that a single generation might raise?

Will it not incur the reproach of history and the indignation of tradition for us at this time to say that this or that classical work shall live or die?

Has not the wisdom of the ages rendered such works inviolate from our interference?

The works of art and literature of an ancient age cannot be judged by modern standards. The good of possessing those literary and cultural records of the past that constitute the very spiritual continuity of civilization cannot be outweighed by any imaginary evil that is alleged against the "Satyricon."

If the "Satyricon" is to fall, the contemporaries of Petronius must also come under the ban. And whom do we find to be his contemporary offenders? Ovid, the master of the elegiac couplet and who in the creative period of English literature was read more than any other ancient poet, not even excepting Virgil. His influence is seen on Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spencer, Milton and Dryden. Juvenal, the great Roman poet, satirist and rhetorician, who held up to bitter scorn the depravities of the days of Domitian, Nero, Claudius and Messalina. Juvenal has written with immortal fire his detestation of the tyranny and cruelty, debauchery and luxury and the levity and effeminacy of the days of Roman disintegration.

To suppress the "Satyricon" is to suppress one of the two extant Latin novels of the post-classical age, leaving but the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius and thereby depriving students of any knowledge of the actual life of the Roman people. As literature is an interpretative description of human life, it cannot limit itself to the interpretation of one side of human nature only, for otherwise it would defeat its own aim of truth and power. If ancient literature were to be suppressed on account of a difference in manners or a change in ethics or even moral standards, the world would soon be empty of the classics, the records of the past lost, and mankind be left without historical memory or continuity. Merely immoral books are not a legitimate part of the heritage of civilization, hence they do not survive. The immoral writings, the pornographic literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries molder in forgotten libraries where not even an antiquarian stirs the dust.

It can scarcely be said that the Legislature intended by means of the statute to destroy literature or to anathemise all historical manners and morals different from our own or to close the treasure house of the past. It was solely intended to prevent the dissemination of pornography produced for evil purposes and for gain. The Legislature did not intend to confer upon any individual or society general powers of censorship over literary works, for if such were the case the power could easily be abused, and the destruction of the freedom of speech, as well as the freedom of press, would be resultant effects of such a statute. Works of art, the masterpieces of ancient ages, scientific works, aye (the masterpieces of ancient ages), the daily press, would be subjected to a censorship that would cause the destruction of our free institutions. One who attempts more than he ought will perform less. One who is not content with repressing scandalous excesses, but demands austere picty, will soon discover that not only has the rendering of an impossible service to the cause of virtue been attempted, but that vice has thereby been aided.

Upon the facts and the law the summonses are dismissed and the defendants are discharged.

CHARLES A. OBERWAGER,
City Magistrate.

The Spanish Main

By Milton Raison

ADMIRALS OF THE CARIBBEAN. By Francis Russell Hart. Houghton Mifflin Company.

IT is difficult to imagine while crossing the calm, indigo waters of the Caribbean that it was once a place of piracy and bloodshed. I remember standing at the rail and endeavoring to thrill myself with the thought that under me were the moldy wrecks of Spanish galleons filled with treasure. But I only succeeded in wondering where on earth there was water of a deeper and purer blue. However, after reading "Admirals of the Caribbean" no doubt remains as to the significance of the Caribbean as a battleground.

The book is beautifully gotten out, attractively bound, containing old and rare cuts, some of which turn the stomach a trifle, like that of the "Spaniards Driven to Cannibalism by Hunger." Though in no way a complete history of the Spanish Main, Francis Hart has succeeded in writing a clear, interesting account of the men concerned with one of the most romantic spots on earth. There are Sir Francis Drake, the gallant forefather of the buccaneers, who died on board his ship; Sir Henry Morgan, the cruelest and most skillful of the buccaneers, who later became governor of Jamaica; Admirals de Pointis and du Casse, who contributed the French piratical touch; Admiral Vernon, who took Puerto Bello with six ships, and Lord Rodney, who played a large part in the ceding of the Spanish possessions in America to England.

One is struck by the great personal courage of the leaders, who were always in the thick of the fray. With such examples it was impossible for the Spaniards to withstand the buccaneers. Drake died at duty, both Morgan and De Pointis were wounded. It was all in the game. The book takes the part of the Spaniards in a good many instances, clearing up the general conception that Spain maltreated the American natives and that the buccaneers were their saviors. This, according to Hart, is not true. If possible, the buccaneers were more cruel than the Spaniards. Extracts, reprinted from Exquemelin, a Dutchman, who was an eyewitness during a good many of Morgan's seizures, state graphically the punishment administered the natives by the buccaneers in the latter's endeavor to discover the hiding places of treasure.

First of World Triology

A remarkable novel with a remarkable history is announced for early publication by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. That is "The Penitents," of which the central figure is Alexander I, Czar of Russia, during Napoleon's day. The poet Pushkin also plays a prominent part. This book is Volume I of a New World Trilogy. **Edna Worthley Underwood**, the author, is a Kansan, who taught herself to read Russian twenty years ago. She learned half a dozen other languages, but Russia and its history interested her most. She translated Russian poetry, wrote a first novel of eighteenth century Russia, called "The Whirlwind," and a play called "A Petersburg Night," dealing with Catherine the Great. She wrote original poetry, and translated Mickiewicz, the Polish poet. At length the idea began to take shape to her that Alexander I symbolized the beginning of a new order in Russia, and was the first person to be touched perilously by that charge. Years of travel and research went to the acquisition of material for the book she then planned, and which is just published. The two volumes to follow are to be called "The Passion Flower" and "The Pageant Maker."

News Notes

Michael Monahan is sailing from France about the first of October, to be in New York for the publication of his new book, "An Attic Dreamer," which will be brought out on the fifteenth.

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Around about Christmas Harper's will bring out a new book by **Zane Grey**, which will make his fourth this year. The title is not announced; but the other three are "To the Last Man," "The Day of the Beast" and "Tales of Lonely Trails."

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Although George Marsh, author of "The Whelps of the Wolf," writes of the far and frozen Hudson Bay region, he was born in the Adirondacks and educated at Yale, where he was captain of the freshman rowing crew. Since then, however, he has spent much time in the country he writes of, making one canoe trip of 1,500 miles at a stretch down the Albany River to the Bay.